

Hablando de gramática

por Señor Conner

Señor Conner is the author of the popular language series BREAKING THE SPANISH BARRIER. Each month he will feature a grammatical topic of interest to our readers. Do you have ideas of topics you would like to see covered? E-mail Señor Conner at john@tobreak.com. You can also visit his website: www.tobreak.com.

The conjunctions “pero,” “sino” and “sino que”

Last summer, we took a look at the most common conjunctions in Spanish: *y* (*e*), *o* (*u*), and *ni*, which correspond to the following words in English: “and,” “or,” and “neither/nor.” In addition to those conjunctions, Spanish uses these words (*pero*, *sino*, *sino que*) to connect clauses within sentences. These words mean “but” or “but rather.”

PERO

“*Pero*” is the most common way to say “but.” It is found, first, after affirmative clauses.

Examples: *Soy de Boston, pero mi equipo favorito de béisbol son Los White Sox de Chicago.*
I’m from Boston, but my favorite baseball team is the Chicago White Sox.

Shakira tiene muchas canciones fantásticas, pero la mejor es “Hips Don’t Lie”.
Shakira has many great songs, but her best is “Hips Don’t Lie.”

“*Pero*” can also follow a negative clause if there is no direct contrast of an equivalent part of speech. In other words, you don’t directly contradict any information given in the first part of the sentence.

Examples: *No hace mucho calor hoy, pero voy a la playa.*
It’s not very hot today, but I’m going to the beach.

Mi profesor no es de Colombia, pero habla bien el español.
My teacher is not from Colombia, but he speaks English well.

SINO

“*Sino*” means “but rather” and is used after a negative clause only when there is a direct contradiction of information given in the first clause. This contradiction is offered with an equivalent part of speech (e.g., noun, adjective, adverb, infinitive).

Examples: *No soy alta, sino baja.*
I’m not tall, but rather (I’m) short.

Los pantalones de Ricky Martin no son de algodón, sino de cuero.
Ricky Martin’s pants are not (made) of cotton, but rather of leather.

No quiero trabajar ahora, sino dormir.
I’m don’t want to work now, but rather (to) sleep.

Remember, if there is no direct contradiction offered, you must use “*pero*” rather than “*sino*.”

Example: *No soy alta, **pero** me encanta jugar al baloncesto.*
I’m not tall, but I do love to play basketball.

SINO QUE

“*Sino que*” also means “but rather” and is found after a negative clause only when there is contradicting information expressed with a conjugated verb.

Examples: *No ahorramos mucho dinero, **sino que** lo gastamos.*
We aren’t saving a lot of money, but rather we are spending it.

*No abrí las ventanas, **sino que** las cerré.*
I didn’t open the windows, but rather I closed them.

Note: The contradiction in these sentences is quite direct – we didn’t save money, but rather we spent it; we didn’t open windows, but rather we closed them. If there is not a direct contradiction, you must use “*pero*.”

Example: *No ahorramos mucho dinero, **pero** nos estamos divirtiendo mucho.*
We’re not saving a lot of money, but we’re having a lot of fun.

Helpful tip: Remember, only “*sino*” and “*sino que*” mean “but rather.” “*Pero*” can only translate as “but.”

PRUEBA DE REPASO

Use “*pero*,” “*sino*,” or “*sino que*” in the following sentences:

- Jennifer no sale ahora con Ben, _____ con Marc.
- Sí, vamos a Caracas este verano, _____ no tenemos tiempo para visitar Maracay.
- Antonio Banderas no llamó a Melanie anoche, _____ le envió un e-mail.
- Esos trabajadores no son muy jóvenes, _____ muy viejos.
- Marisela no puede hablar conmigo esta mañana, _____ no importa porque yo voy a llamarla esta noche.
- Simon Cowell insulta a muchas personas en *American Idol*, _____ yo creo que es un hombre muy simpático.
- No pensamos ahorrar dinero durante el festival de la Calle Ocho, _____ gastarlo.
- “No perdimos el campeonato de baloncesto, _____ lo ganamos”, dijo Joakim Noah.